



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Solvent-Contaminated Rags

Fact Sheet

9/1999

Division of Environmental Quality
Hazardous Waste Program

What is the regulatory status of rags contaminated with solvents, printing inks, paints, etc.?

Dirty rags are often generated by printing industries, automotive maintenance and repair shops, and various manufacturing facilities. Typically, rags are used in cleaning or degreasing operations together with a solvent or mixture of solvents. In practice, a solvent is applied to a rag which is then used to clean surface or the solvent is applied to a surface which is then cleaned with a rag. Rags can also be used to wipe off excess paint or printing inks from work surfaces. This process is repeated until the rag becomes so contaminated that it must be discarded or cleaned before reuse.

Discarded rags could contain toxic levels of characteristic hazardous waste such as heavy metals or certain volatile solvents found in 40 CFR 261.24. It is even more likely that the discarded rags may be contaminated with a listed hazardous waste such as a solvent or degreaser which meets the regulatory definition in 40 CFR 261 Subpart D. Mixtures of solid waste with listed hazardous waste remain listed hazardous waste.

References: 10CSR25-5.262(l) incorporating 40CFR262.11.

Waste Management Options

If possible, convert to an equally effective nonhazardous cleaning solvent. If contaminated rags used in cleaning and degreasing operations are laundered and reused, they are not solid waste or hazardous waste. (NOTE: Laundries should be notified of any solvent contamination and they must be authorized to treat their own wastewater or to discharge to a municipal wastewater treatment facility.)

Rags used as absorbents to clean up spilled hazardous waste must be disposed of at a permitted hazardous waste treatment, storage, or disposal facility. All regulations applicable to the management, storage, and transportation of hazardous waste must be followed. The laundering of rags used to clean up hazardous waste could be considered improper treatment and disposal of hazardous waste.

If contaminated rags are discarded, a hazardous waste determination is required. If hazardous, the rags must be disposed at a permitted hazardous waste treatment, storage, or disposal facility. All regulations applicable to the management, storage, transportation and disposal of hazardous waste must be followed. If the rags are nonhazardous they may be disposed of in a sanitary landfill if they contain no free liquids. If free liquids are present in nonhazardous rags, absorbent may be added prior to disposal.



The information in this guide also applies to contaminated uniforms, mops and other industrial textiles.

Please note that this guidance is not intended for use by interim status or permitted hazardous waste treatment, storage or disposal facilities.

For more information call or write:

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Hazardous Waste Program

P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176

1-800-361-4827 or (573) 751-3176 office

(573) 751-7869 fax

(<http://www.dnr.state.mo.us/deq/hwp>) Program Home Page

Technical Assistance Program

P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176

1-800-361-4827 or (573) 526-6627 office

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(<http://www.dnr.state.mo.us/deq/tap>) Program Home Page